

## CLAIMS

1                   1.     A method for securely sending an electronic message to  
2     multiple recipients, the method comprising:

3                   (a)     receiving an indication of an encrypted electronic message to  
4     be sent to multiple recipient users;

5                   (b)     storing a single copy of the electronic message;

6                   (c)     creating a notification electronic message including a reference  
7     to the electronic message;

8                   (d)     sending a copy of the notification electronic message to each  
9     of the recipient users; and

10                  upon receiving a request from a recipient user for the referenced  
11     electronic message,

12                  (e)     decrypting the received encrypted electronic message;

13                  (f)     retrieving an encryption key for the recipient user;

14                  (g)     encrypting a copy of the decrypted electronic message  
15     with the retrieved encryption key; and

16                  (h)     sending the encrypted copy to the recipient user for  
17     temporary storage while the sent encrypted copy is reviewed.

1                   2.     The method of claim 1 including:

2                   under the control of the server, when it is determined that an  
3     encrypted copy of the electronic message has been sent to all of the recipient users,  
4     deleting the stored single copy of the electronic message.

1                   3.     The method of claim 1 including:

2                   under the control of the server, when it is determined that an  
3     encrypted copy of the electronic message has been sent to all of the recipient users

4 and that none of the recipient users have indicated that the electronic message is to  
5 be saved, deleting the stored single copy of the electronic message.

1 4. The method of claim 1 including:  
2 under the control of the server, when it is determined that a specified  
3 period of time after the sending of the notification electronic messages has expired,  
4 deleting the stored single copy of the electronic message.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein contents of the notification  
2 electronic message consist of the reference to the received electronic message, an  
3 identification of a sender of the electronic message, and a subject of the electronic  
4 message.

1 6. The method of claim 1 including retrieving message sending  
2 instructions for a recipient user, and wherein the sending of the copy of the  
3 notification electronic message to that recipient user is performed according to the  
4 message sending instructions.

1 7. The method of claim 6 wherein the retrieved message sending  
2 instructions specify types of information to be included in the notification electronic  
3 message sent to that recipient user, and wherein the copy of the notification  
4 electronic message to be sent to that recipient user includes the specified types of  
5 information.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein for at least one recipient user,  
2 before the copy of the notification electronic message is sent to the at least one  
3 recipient user, the copy is encrypted with the encryption key for the at least one  
4 recipient user.

1           9.     The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient user is unable to  
2 permanently store the electronic message.

1           10.    The method of claim 1 wherein steps (a)-(h) are performed  
2 under control of a server computer, and including:

3                 before the receiving of the indication, under control of a sending  
4 computer,

5                         receiving an indication of the electronic message;

6                         retrieving an encryption key for the server computer, the server  
7 encryption key distinct from the retrieved encryption key for the recipient user;

8                         encrypting the electronic message with the retrieved server  
9 encryption key; and

10                        sending the encrypted electronic message to the server  
11 computer.

1           11.    A computer-implemented method for sending an electronic  
2 communication to recipients, the method comprising:

3                 receiving an indication of an electronic communication and of at least  
4 one recipient to receive the electronic communication;

5                 determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
6 communication have been indicated; and

7                 when it is determined that multiple recipients have been indicated,  
8                         storing the electronic communication;

9                 notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic  
10 communication without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and

11                in response to a request for the electronic communication from  
12 a recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.

1           12.    The method of claim 11 including:  
2                when it is determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated,  
3                sending the electronic communication to the recipient without  
4    waiting for a request for the electronic communication.

1           13.    The method of claim 11 including:  
2                tracking the sending of the electronic communication to the  
3    recipients; and  
4                when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
5    recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           14.    The method of claim 11 including:  
2                when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
3    to all of the recipients and that none of the recipients have indicated that the  
4    electronic communication is to be saved, deleting the stored electronic  
5    communication.

1           15.    The method of claim 11 including:  
2                when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
3    to all of the recipients and that all of the recipients have indicated that the electronic  
4    communication can be deleted, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           16.    The method of claim 11 including:  
2                determining a period of time for which the electronic communication  
3    will be stored; and  
4                when the determined period of time has expired, deleting the stored  
5    electronic communication.

1           17. The method of claim 11 wherein the notifying of a recipient of  
2 the electronic communication involves sending a distinct indicator electronic  
3 communication to the recipient.

1           18. The method of claim 11 including retrieving notifying  
2 instructions for a recipient, and wherein the notifying of the recipient is performed  
3 according to the notifying instructions.

1           19. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 supplied by a sender of the electronic communication.

1           20. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 supplied by the recipient.

1           21. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions are  
2 determined automatically based on past interactions with the recipient.

1           22. The method of claim 18 wherein the notifying instructions  
2 indicate that the notifying is to be performed in an encrypted manner.

1           23. A computer-implemented method for sending an electronic  
2 communication to a plurality of recipients, the method comprising:  
3           receiving an indication of the electronic communication and of the  
4 plurality of recipients to receive the electronic communication;  
5           storing a single copy of the electronic communication;  
6           notifying each of the recipients of the electronic communication  
7 without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and  
8           in response to a request for the electronic communication from a  
9 recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.

1           24. The method of claim 23 including:  
2           tracking the requests for the electronic communication from the  
3 recipients; and  
4           after all of the recipients have requested the electronic  
5 communication, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           25. The method of claim 24 wherein the deleting is performed only  
2 when none of the recipients desire continuing access to the electronic  
3 communication.

1           26. The method of claim 23 including automatically sending the  
2 electronic communication to a non-recipient authorized to access the electronic  
3 communication.

1           27. The method of claim 23 including retrieving sending  
2 instructions for a recipient, and wherein the sending of the electronic  
3 communication is performed according to the sending instructions.

1           28. The method of claim 27 wherein the sending instructions are  
2 supplied by a sender of the electronic communication.

1           29. The method of claim 27 wherein the sending instructions  
2 indicate that the sending is to be performed in an encrypted manner.

1           30. A computer-implemented method for one of a plurality of  
2 designated recipients of an electronic communication to receive the electronic  
3 communication from a server that stores a single copy of the electronic  
4 communication, the method comprising:

5           receiving an electronic communication notification from the server  
6 that references the single copy of the electronic communication, the electronic  
7 communication notification distinct from the electronic communication;

8           requesting from the server the referenced electronic communication;  
9 and

10          receiving from the server a copy of the requested electronic  
11 communication.

1           31. The method of claim 30 including:

2           when access to the electronic communication is no longer desired,  
3 indicating to the server to delete the electronic communication, so that the server  
4 deletes the single stored copy of the electronic communication after receiving  
5 indications from all recipients to delete the electronic communication.

1           32. The method of claim 31 including:

2           after the receiving of the electronic communication notification,  
3 storing the electronic communication notification locally; and

4           after the indicating to the server to delete the electronic  
5 communication, deleting the stored electronic communication notification even if  
6 all recipients have not indicated to delete the electronic communication.

1           33. The method of claim 31 including storing the electronic  
2 communication locally such that the local stored electronic communication is  
3 preserved even when the server deletes the single stored copy.

1           34. The method of claim 30 wherein the electronic communication  
2 received from the server is encrypted using a public encryption key for the one of  
3 the plurality of designated recipients, and including retrieving a private encryption  
4 key for the one of the plurality of designated recipients to decrypt the electronic  
5 communication.

1           35. The method of claim 30 wherein the method is performed by a  
2 receiving computer lacking sufficient permanent storage to store the electronic  
3 communication.

1           36. The method of claim 30 wherein contents of the received  
2 electronic communication notification are based on preferences for the one of the  
3 plurality of designated recipients, the preferences previously supplied to the server.

1           37. A computer-readable medium containing instructions for  
2 controlling a computer system to send an electronic communication to recipients  
3 by:

4               receiving an indication of an electronic communication and of at least  
5 one recipient to receive the electronic communication;

6               determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
7 communication have been indicated; and

8               when it is determined that multiple recipients have been indicated,

9               storing the electronic communication;

10              notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic  
11 communication without sending the electronic communication to the recipients; and

12              in response to a request for the electronic communication from  
13 a recipient, sending the electronic communication to the recipient.



1           38. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled by:

3           when it is determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated,  
4           sending the electronic communication to the recipient without  
5 waiting for a request for the electronic communication.

1           39. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled by:

3           tracking the sending of the electronic communication to the  
4 recipients; and

5           when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
6 recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           40. The computer-readable medium of claim 37 wherein the  
2 computer system is further controlled:

3           when it is determined that the electronic communication has been sent  
4 to all of the recipients and that the electronic communication has not been indicated  
5 to be saved by any of the recipients, deleting the stored electronic communication.

1           41. A computer system for sending an electronic communication  
2 to recipients, comprising:

3           a communication distributor for receiving an indication of the  
4 electronic communication and of at least one recipient to receive the electronic  
5 communication, for determining whether multiple recipients of the electronic  
6 communication have been indicated, for storing the electronic communication and  
7 notifying each of the multiple recipients of the electronic communication without  
8 sending the electronic communication to the recipients when it is determined that  
9 multiple recipients have been indicated, and for sending the electronic

10 communication to a recipient in response to a request for the electronic  
11 communication from the recipient.

1           42. The computer system of claim 41 wherein the communication  
2 distributor is further for sending the electronic communication to a single recipient  
3 without waiting for a request for the electronic communication when it is  
4 determined that multiple recipients have not been indicated.

1           43. The computer system of claim 42, further comprising:  
2 a communication tracker for tracking the sending of the electronic  
3 communication to the recipients, and for deleting the stored electronic  
4 communication when the electronic communication has been sent to all of the  
5 recipients.

1           44. The computer system of claim 43, further comprising:  
2 a communication tracker for deleting the stored electronic  
3 communication when it is determined that the electronic communication has been  
4 sent to all of the recipients and that that the electronic communication has not been  
5 indicated to be saved by any of the recipients.